

Are textbook references to Darwin close to extinction?

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Abstract

The textbooks used to teach GCE A-level biology 30 years ago tended to concentrate on traditional zoology and botany, with just a passing reference to evolution. As biology established itself as a new discipline, books (and syllabuses) began to take an integrated approach, and evolution became an important theme that helped students to appreciate the interrelationships between plants and animals, cells and molecules, biochemistry and physiology, systematics and genetics, and ecology and behaviour. With the modularisation of modern specifications this theme has all but disappeared from textbooks and a detailed discussion of Darwin and the evidence for evolution has been replaced by perfunctory references to variation and selection and, in some cases, politically correct acknowledgements of creationism.

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